



ARIZONA OFFICE OF
**PROBLEM
GAMBLING**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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“March Madness” Can Lead To Big Problems **Three Weeks, \$3 Billion in Bets**

*Recovering Problem Gamblers, Counselors Available As Resources for Media;
Help Available For Problem Gambling By Calling **1.800.NEXT STEP***

PHOENIX, Arizona (March 13, 2006) — The NCAA Tournament is called “March Madness” because of the excitement it generates for sports fans. But for problem gamblers, it can be one of the most dangerous times of the year.

From “brackets” and office pools to wagers on specific games, Americans bet an estimated \$3 billion — the vast majority of that illegally — on the NCAA Tournament, making it the biggest time of the year for sports gambling. And many problem gamblers take March Madness too far, even extending their problem gambling into other kinds of betting.

The Arizona Office of Problem Gaming is working to educate Arizonans to recognize the signs of problem gambling. As part of that effort, this week the office is working with its treatment counselors to provide resources to the media in telling the story about problem gambling during the NCAA Tournament.

Individuals who have sought treatment and are coping with problem gambling, as well as problem gambling counselors, are available this week to tell their stories. To arrange an interview with someone recovering from problem gambling, please call the Office of Problem Gambling at the number above.

The office encourages those who think they have a problem or know someone who may have a problem to call **1.800.NEXT STEP** to get help.

Here are some of the warning signs of problem gambling:

- Betting more and more money over time
- Spending more time gambling than planned

Help for problem gambling.

1.800.NEXTSTEP
(1.800.639.8738)

- Lying to people about gambling
- Using gambling to escape problems
- Borrowing to replace lost money
- Using credit to gamble
- Gambling to get lost money back
- Unsuccessfully trying to cut back or quit
- Gambling alone
- Losing interest in other activities

“During this time of year when problem gambling can be particularly prevalent, we want people to know that there is help available for those with a problem and their families and loved ones,” said Rick Pyper, Director of the Arizona Office of Problem Gambling. “Information and help are always available by calling **1.800.NEXT STEP**. If people are aware of the warning signs, they should call at the first indication that there might be a problem.”

The **1.800.NEXT STEP** number provides those concerned with their own gambling or those worried about loved ones with a variety of resources to help them deal with the issues caused by problem gambling. Those resources include:

- How to recognize the warning signs of problem gambling
- Information on state-funded treatment and counseling
- Information on Gamblers Anonymous meetings
- Help for families affected by problem gambling

These resources and additional information are also available online at the Arizona Office of Problem Gambling’s web site, <http://www.problemgambling.az.gov/>.

“The **1.800.NEXT STEP** number is a tremendous resource for these individuals and their loved ones, and we encourage anyone who thinks they or someone they know may have a gambling problem to call,” Pyper said.